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ABSTRACT

Portfolios have been used in the authentic evaluation of artists, business professionals, students, and teachers. This paper examines the feasibility of using portfolios to evaluate administrators in training. The document describes portfolios and their uses in administrator-preparation courses, as job applications, and as on-the-job assessment of practicing administrators. A survey of 90 school districts within a 6-county region around California State University, Stanislaus, elicited responses from 35 administrators. Thirty of them said that an administrative portfolio would help candidates applying for public school-administration positions. Twenty-nine administrators said that candidates enhance their job applications by providing a visual image of their qualifications. They also reported that the most important materials to be included in portfolios are those related to evaluation and professional development--such as samples of teacher evaluations, evidence of leadership in professional development, evidence of participation in professional development, and district evaluation reports. They assigned the most importance to the domains of leadership, instruction, and learning environment. Finally, they suggested that portfolios should: (1) use a clear, brief, and organized format; (2) focus on specific strengths of the applicant; and (3) include pertinent, verifiable information. (LMI)

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Portfolio Assessment of Administrators

Paper presented at

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Assessment is one of the very important topics currently discussed in the profession of education. Over the past few years portfolio assessment for students has been the topic of presentations and discussions at conferences, table talks, professional networks, board rooms, and classrooms. Growing out of the idea of authentically evaluating student learning, the concern for practical and meaningful assessment of teachers emerged. Now the time has come for the use of portfolios for administrators in training. Even administrators in practice could use the professional administrative portfolio to demonstrate their competence and as a measure of accountability.

Who uses portfolios?

Many professions for centuries have used portfolios to demonstrate their skills and accomplishments to clients, prospective employers, and usually to specific audiences. Artists, such as painters, musicians, sign painters, and hair stylists, all have used the portfolio as a collection of their work for their own benefit and to demonstrate their abilities. Architects, stock brokers, advertisers and other professionals also utilize the portfolio as a method to gain new clients and demonstrate the development of new ideas to existing clients. These applications of portfolios are not too distant from the use of portfolios in schools to demonstrate a collection of student work both for the student's benefit as well as to demonstrate

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abilities and growth throughout the school year and from year to year. Teachers have used portfolios to record and demonstrate accomplishments of student growth, including personal and academic goals. The portfolio provides evidence of student growth in reading, mathematics, spelling, art, and other areas. At Parent-Teacher conferences, the teacher, parents, and the student assess the growth demonstrated through the portfolio.

In recent years, teachers have been asked to give an account of their professional competence and experiences through the use of a portfolio. There are some school principals in California who use the teacher portfolio to assess growth and then use that information for the formal evaluation. Teachers have found that the development of their own portfolio has helped them organize portfolios for students. Teachers have gained employment by presenting a portfolio at a job interview to demonstrate professional competence, creativity, organization, and skill. It is time for the administrator to develop and use a professional portfolio for reasons mentioned and others which will be presented in this paper.

What is a portfolio?

- **A demonstration of one's public self as a representation of what one can do, what one knows, and what one has done, presented to a select audience.**

The two most common types of portfolios in Educational Administration are the Professional Development Portfolio and the Demonstration Portfolio or it may be referred to as a Showcase Portfolio.

A Professional Development Portfolio is used by the administrator to monitor one's growth, to identify strengths and weaknesses in professional training and development, and to assess one's practice as an educational administrator. It is usually a comprehensive collection of work, projects, reports, evaluations, and other items which will be discussed later in this paper. The format may be based on a variety of factors which will be discussed later.

The Demonstration Portfolio is used as a presentation of strengths and administrative skill and accomplishments. A selection of material and artifacts from the Professional Development Portfolio is used when one is making a presentation of oneself, such as at a job interview. The format for this type of portfolio is usually tailored to a specific job, much like a letter of application.

When is a portfolio used by the educational administrator?

• Individual Assessment, Induction, and Supervision EDAD 5890 is the first semester course requirement for the Administrative Services Credential at California State University Stanislaus.

The introductory course for the Professional Administrative Services Credential initiates the process of developing a professional administrative portfolio. Credential candidates discuss the importance of practical and meaningful assessment of their own progress throughout the credential program that is related to the use of portfolios for students and teachers in their perspective schools. The requirement for this one unit assessment course is for credential candidates to begin the process of portfolio development. It is called a portfolio skeleton.

The 1993 National Policy Board competency domains are presented to the candidates as a possible format for their portfolio. The instructor continually emphasizes that students need to develop a format that will work best for them. Students are reassured that they are not expected to have artifacts to fill every domain listed in the National Policy Board document. The emphasis of this first semester is to begin the process of developing a portfolio for the purpose of self-assessment and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. The remainder of the students' course work throughout the program may be shaped and determined by the strengths and weaknesses identified by evaluation of the portfolio. At the end of the first semester, credit is given for the portfolio if candidates demonstrate that they have worked through the process, developed a format for their portfolio, began to add items and artifacts to it, and can critically analyze and discuss some of their strengths and weaknesses identified as a result of the portfolio.

• Every semester - each instructor discusses, provides input and suggestions, and helps the student develop the portfolio. (Each professor assists as a mentor to shape and support the professional development of every student.)

As the student continues in the program, one of the program goals is that the portfolio continue to be developed by the student and monitored by the instructor and school district mentor. There are five core courses students must take in the Professional Administrative Credential Program and each course is usually taught by a different instructor. This allows each student to have the opportunity to be mentored by five university instructors, as well as the assigned school district mentor or mentors,

each one offering input and suggestions as the student formats and develops a professional portfolio which will become an authentic representation of professional administrative skill and competence.

- Academic Assessment - End of the program. Student demonstrates portfolio to a panel of local practitioners, professors, and peers.

Although this portion of the evaluation process is not yet in place at CSU, Stanislaus, it is in the program plan to use the portfolio as a final assessment tool. Credential candidates will demonstrate their growth, professional development, strengths and weaknesses, and competence as they exit the administrative program. The exit interview will consist of a panel of local practitioners, professors, and peers to which the candidate will present their portfolio. It will be similar to a job interview in which specific questions will be asked. The candidate will need to demonstrate competence in specific areas of administration, which will be determined as a program standard of competency. Evaluation of the candidate will be made by the panel.

- Job interview

During a job interview, if only one out of seven final candidates brings a portfolio to provide examples of projects, communication skills, leadership ability, management style, evaluations or any other particular skill the interview committee is assessing, the one candidate with the portfolio will have left a visual representation of their skill and ability. Using the portfolio for a job interview will demonstrate the candidate's organizational skills, presentation skills, and provide visual aides which the committee will remember.

In preparing for the job interview, students are reminded to tailor the portfolio for the particular job. If their are certain qualifications requested in the job announcement, then those qualities must be highlighted in the portfolio. The portfolio is not to be left with the committee, nor is it to be sent ahead of time; unless requested in either instance. Students are encouraged not to use the portfolio during the entire interview but to use it only to highlight specific points which can be skillfully and professionally emphasized by using the demonstration portfolio.

Students are also reminded that the portfolio could hinder their chances of being hired. If the portfolio is sloppy, unorganized, or contains too much unnecessary material it becomes undesirable. If the portfolio is presented poorly or given to people to read while the candidate answers questions, these practices could be detrimental. In addition, some

potential employers do not like the idea of an administrative portfolio. Evidenced by the survey which will be presented later in this paper, 5 out of 35 superintendents or personnel directors responding to the questionnaire did not think that a portfolio for administrators was a good idea.

- On the Job

Students have found the administrative portfolio which they have developed for the program requirement has several uses at their particular schools of employment. One of the most common uses has been for the administrator to serve as a model for the development of teacher professional portfolios. The administrator's portfolio encourages teachers who are struggling with the idea of what a portfolio is, how it is organized, and the benefits of such a document.

Self-assessment through personal and professional reflection as well as personal evaluation have been the most meaningful outcomes of this project for the administrative candidate. It is clear that any successful administrator must be reflective and have a tool for self evaluation. Students continually laud the positive benefits of this requirement in its ability to help them assess strengths, identify weaknesses, focus on needs, and emphasize certain areas of their practice.

One final use which has been demonstrated by the development of the administrative portfolio by students is the use of the portfolio in their annual district evaluation. It is a natural progression for the district to use similar assessment and evaluation techniques which the university employs, if the university model is sound, rigorous, meaningful, and valid. In one district, the student, an elementary school principal, presented his year of accomplishments, successful goals, and highlights of his administrative strengths to his supervisor by presenting his portfolio. He also discussed what he believed needed improvement in his practice, thus demonstrating insight, reflection, and future goal setting. His supervisor was most impressed. In another district, a superintendent requested permission to use the Administrator Portfolio Questionnaire to design a plan to implement a portfolio requirement for the administrators in his district.

Why use portfolios for administrative credential candidates?

In this age of educational accountability - it makes sense for administrators to be proactive, responsible, able, and willing to demonstrate their professional competence. The Administrative Portfolio is just one practical way to present one's skills and abilities.

Much attention and interest in recent years has been given to student portfolios, rubric development, classroom implementation and organization, and authentic assessment. It makes sense to have student centered classrooms, student centered activities, and assessment techniques which authentically demonstrate students' abilities while identifying their weaknesses. I upheld this philosophy during my tenure as a school district administrator. Why should I change when I am now a university professor?

1. It is my goal as a professor of educational administration, that students have a genuine, authentic, meaningful, and practical way to assess their progress both in my courses and in the program.

2. Revision of the Administrative Services Credential requirement laws in California require authentic assessment of candidates throughout the program.

3. **Because it makes sense!**
   We require it for the kids.
   We require it for the teachers
   Why not the administrators.

In this era of public school accountability, administrators must be willing and able to demonstrate their competence as educational leaders.

How does one assist credential candidates in the development of their administrative portfolio?

The guideline provided to students is an outline of the 21 competency domains from the (1993) National Policy Board for Educational Administration, Principals for Our Changing Schools: The Knowledge and Skills Base. This is just a guide! Students are told that they can use all 21 domains, or they can be creative and develop their own formatting ideas

within the portfolio. Students usually develop more than a "skeleton" this first semester with anywhere from 4 to 21 domain areas selected. A common question students ask is, "What do you want in it?" They also ask, "What does one look like?" The only answers they receive in response to these two questions are, "Be creative!" "Make it work for you!"

Goals in the Portfolio Assignment

Students are to:

- learn to be reflective about their own practice of educational administration
- be able to conceptualize what they do
- be able to present what they do in a clear and concise format
- identify their strengths and weaknesses
- take charge of their own professional growth and development
- be an example for the teachers on their staff
- be ready to apply for a job.

The following ten points are carefully explained to students before they begin the portfolio and throughout the semester:

1. Don't do this assignment for me (the instructor).
2. Make this a working document for yourself.
3. This is to be a demonstration of your practice as an administrator.
4. Identify the areas which are your strengths.
5. Identify the areas in which you need more professional development.
6. You can continue to work on this throughout all of your courses and the rest of your career.
7. You can use this to demonstrate to your teachers what you are asking of them.
8. You can use this to prepare a job application and before an interview.
9. You can take this, or parts of it, with you as a demonstration portfolio to a job interview.
10. Don't prepare this document for me!

Future goals for the portfolio:

As mentioned earlier, the use of administrative portfolios has not been fully implemented at CSU, Stanislaus. Once the plan is fully implemented, the student portfolio will be used as an exit assessment instrument for the Administrative Credential Program. At that time, every student will

participate in a mock interview session and have to present their portfolio as a means of exit evaluation.

Other goals include students supporting one another and encouraging peers to use the portfolio as an on going professional development tool. Students could encourage their site/district level supervisor to use their portfolio as an evaluation instrument. This could possibly become a method of evaluation throughout the district for all administrators. By inviting district personnel to participate at the exit interviews, local school site/district level personnel will see the advantage of administrators using portfolios to demonstrate progress, growth, and accountability and use them in their own districts. Finally, further research will continue to strengthen the process of the development and use of Administrative Portfolios.

Current Research In Portfolio Assessment

In a recent survey sent to 90 school districts within a six county region of California State University, Stanislaus, 35 administrators responded. They were asked if an administrative portfolio would be helpful for candidates applying for administrative positions in public schools. They were also asked to help identify what should be included in a portfolio for administrators and to offer any other comments or suggestions they might have regarding this topic. The respondents included 27 superintendents, 5 assistant superintendents of human resources, 2 principals, and 1 college president.

In the initial question asked, 30 individuals responded positively that they thought an administrative portfolio would be helpful for candidates applying for administrative positions in public schools. Two general responses indicated that the portfolio would provide more information about the candidate and that a portfolio would provide specific information such as scope of training, examples of experiences, duties, responsibilities, and practical experiences not necessarily identified in a job interview. Five of the respondents indicated that they did not think that portfolio was a good idea.

In the second question, 29 respondents indicated that the portfolio could be used at any administrative level which the candidate was applying, although some indicated that the position may have some influence on the benefits of a portfolio. The overall response was that more information was better and that candidates with a portfolio could have their hiring opportunities enhanced by providing a visual dimension.

Specific items were rank ordered by preference to be included in the portfolio. The highest point value was given to areas of evaluation and professional development with 49 and 50 points. The respondents identified the following:

"Evaluation and Professional Development" (self and others)

50 - Samples of teacher evaluations
49 - Evidence of leadership in professional development
49 - Evidence of professional development participation
49 - District evaluation reports on individual's administrative service

"Successful Leadership activities/involvement with staff, parents, community, students, and supervisors"

39 - Samples of teacher success as a result of the candidates guidance and leadership
35 - Samples of correspondence with parents
34 - Evidence of community service and leadership
33 - Records of past teaching successes
32 - Samples of student success as a result of the candidate's guidance and leadership
30 - Samples of projects completed for superiors

"Scrap book materials"

22 - Newspaper clippings about projects
15 - Graduate course projects
14 - Graduate course papers
12 - Newspaper clippings about the administrator
09 - Photographs from the administrator's past school

It should be noted from the list above and a separate question in the survey that certain items should be left out of the portfolio based on the recommendation of the respondents. Some of the items they identified were high school records, age, birth date, picture, racial and ethnic origin, marital status, number of children, gender, newspaper clippings and photographs unless specific to a project that has documented evidence to support. Fillers (items not directly related to the job), dated material, and confidential material are discouraged. It was also suggested that publications and presentations should be limited to those relevant to position.

The respondents identified the domains of Leadership, Instruction, and the Learning Environment as the most important to be able to demonstrate in the portfolio for successful administrative candidates. The competency areas of Problem Analysis, Judgment, Organizational Oversight, Implementation, and Staff Development were rated as the next most important areas to identify and demonstrate. Finally, the next level of ranking included areas of Curriculum Design, Student Guidance and Development, Resource Allocation, and Written Expression. All of these areas were considered important and the candidate must develop and hopefully demonstrate competence in these areas.

The respondents did not hesitate to offer suggestion and advice about areas they thought were most important in developing the portfolio. The most common suggestion was the importance of a quality format. One that is clear, brief, organized, relevant, and easy to present. They also noted that it must demonstrate specific strengths and be focused. Some suggestions included that the candidate should demonstrate willingness to learn, enthusiasm, a high energy level, and a love of people. The information in the portfolio must be pertinent, verifiable, and practical rather than philosophical. "Be prepared, be honest, and demonstrate vision," said one respondent. The overall recommendation of the respondents was to have a portfolio organized in a manner that best presents one's strengths to the evaluator.

Other thoughts on the subject of portfolios offered by the respondents were:

- This is a practical effective way for a candidate to validate academic attainments.
- Many of the items fit well in the interview and reference areas.
- Excellent direction to be taking for the preparation of future administrators!
- Great idea - should be for all - student, teacher, administrator.
- I would suggest that skills, or lack thereof, be used in the evaluation of administrators using the National Policy Board competency domains. The domains could be developed into standards of criteria.
- I have used portfolios to evaluate administrators and our board was most impressed.
- Interesting concept which deserves consideration.
- Community colleges have specific needs that should be included in your program.

Why Portfolio Assessment?

Because it makes sense!

1. Don't do this assignment for me.
2. Make this a working document for yourself.
3. This is to be a demonstration of your practice as an administrator.
4. Identify the areas which are your strengths.
5. Identify the areas in which you need more professional development.
6. You can continue to work on this throughout all of your classes.
7. You can use this to demonstrate to your teachers what you are asking of them.
8. You can use this to prepare a job application and before an interview.
9. You can take this, or parts of it, with you as a demonstration portfolio at a job interview.
10. Don't prepare this document for me!

Don't do it for me.....